

Famous Folks

Music

Charles "Cow Cow" Davenport (1884 - 1956) was a musician believed to be instrumental in the design of the whole Boogie-Woogie (or Barrelhouse) movement which evolved into the sounds we now call "The Blues". Davenport's final resting place is in Bedford Heights at Evergreen Cemetery on Northfield Road. When Davenport first learned to play the piano and organ, it was with the intent of his following family example, to play for his father's church where his mother was organist. However, the Alabama Theological Seminary expelled him in 1911 because of the Ragtime tunes he played at a church function. Davenport and company toured the vaudeville circuit of Chicago and other cities writing and selling many songs for which he failed to get his rightful acknowledgement. Davenport recorded several of his signature pieces, but none brought him more fame than "Cow Cow Blues" which he first performed in many variations in 1928. In 1938, he suffered a stroke that affected his piano playing for the rest of his life with paralysis in his right hand. He kept his vocals active until he gained strength to again play piano in public. His "comeback" was often interrupted by sickness. Davenport died in 1956 of heart problems in Cleveland.

Science

Dr. Mary Ellen Weber (Bedford High School Class of 1980) was a Bedford Heights native. Dr. Weber earned degrees from Purdue University and the University of California at Berkley. In 1992, Dr. Weber was selected as an astronaut, logging over 450 hours in space. On one of her first missions she proudly wore her Bedford Heights City Pin on her NASA spacesuit. She has also made significant contributions as a research scientist at Texas Instruments in Dallas, Texas.

Communications

TV News Anchorman Dale Solly received his first major network anchor position even before he graduated from college. Although he had a number of news placements, he is best remembered where he spent most of his career in Cleveland, Ohio and Washington, D.C. Solly, who grew up on Holly Road, covered many Homeland Security assignments.

Sports

Bedford Heights' resident Jim Rittwage was a 1965 Cleveland Indians Baseball Star Pitcher. The community had special pride in the Tribe for this hometown boy whose family lived on Columbus Road. Eric Beverly may have gotten his start playing football in his Metro Estates neighborhood or the Carylwood School playground, but he evolved to playing pro football with the Detroit Lions in 1998. Beverly has played as tight end, left guard and offensive lineman. He has remembered his home school with donations and hosted a football camp in Allan Park, Michigan to enrich the lives of area children through physical fitness, academics and spiritual and life development.

Chris Chambers, part of the same Carylwood playground crowd, along with Anthony Byrd also became professional football players. Lee Evans had everyone's attention as Captain of the Wisconsin Badgers and

went on to NFL status as a member of the Buffalo Bills.

Hollywood

Bedford Heights native Renee Faia went to Hollywood and found fame. She had roles in several popular TV shows, including "The Wonder Years" and "Seinfeld". Her talent was showcased when she was cast as Cher in the made for TV movie "The Beat Goes On-The Sonny and Cher Story". She was also featured in the box office hit "The American President" with Michael Douglas and Annette Benning. Halle Berry is a 1984 graduate of Bedford High School. Berry has received Emmy and Golden Globe awards for Introducing Dorothy Dandridge, and an Academy Award for Best Actress in 2002 for her performance in Monster's Ball, becoming the first and still only woman of African-American descent to have won the award for Best Actress. She is one of the highest-paid actresses in Hollywood and also a Revlon spokeswoman. She is attempting to expand into the production side of Hollywood.

Before becoming an actress, Berry entered several beauty contests, finishing runner-up in the Miss USA (1986), and winning the Miss USA World 1986 title. (Under pageant rules in effect at that time, the first runner-up at Miss USA automatically competed at Miss World.) Her breakthrough feature film role was in the 1991 Jungle Fever. This led to roles in The Flintstones (1994), Bulworth (1998), X-Men (2000) and its sequels, and Die Another Day. She also won a worst actress Razzie award in 2005 for Catwoman, and accepted the award in person.